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## ON THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER OF THE ESQUIMAUX.

By RICHARD KING, M.D.

Read before the Ethnological Society, June 19. 1844.

Vitruvius states, that "the northern nations, from cold and moisture, have large bodies, a white skin, red hair, grey eyes, and much blood, and, breathing a thick and cold air, are dull and slow of understanding."\* "The frigidity of the North Americans," writes Lord Kames, "men and women, differing in that particular from all other savages, is to me evidence of a separate race."† According to Herder, "The blood of man, near the pole, circulates but slowly, the heart beats but languidly; consequently, the unmarried live chastely, the women almost require compulsion to take upon them the troubles of a married life; and the mother suckles her infant a long time, with all the profound tenacious affection of animal maternity. So hard is their fate, that, in winter, they are often obliged to support themselves in their caves by sucking their own blood." M. Lesson says of the habits of the Hyperborean people, "The rigour of the climate has obliged them to dig for themselves subterraneous abodes. They sew with nerves their winter garments, made of the skins of seals, and make their summer dresses of the intestine of the largest whales. The Esquimaux is skilful in the chase of foxes and sables, whose skin serves him for clothing and for barter. Their loose morality renders the men addicted to polygamy, and indifferent to the virtue of their wives and daughters." The French historian, Charlevoix, asserts that the Esquimaux "are the only savages known who eat raw flesh; that they wear their hair in great disorder; that their beard is so thick that it is difficult to discover the features; that there is something terrifying in their face, and that their whole exterior shews the animal, or is very brutish; that of all people in America, there is none who correspond more with our European idea of a savage, for they are ferocious, wild, defying,

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\* Quoted by Lord Kames, pages 51 and 52. † Kames, p. 52.

‡ Quoted by Prichard, p. 502.

restless, and always inclined to do mischief to the stranger ; and that they have little intercourse and commerce with their nearest neighbours.”\*

Such are the authorities upheld by Dr Prichard in the present day, and such are the materials used by Dr Beke for establishing this hypothesis : “ That the origin of the numerous and widely differing races of man is to be referred to a single parent stock, possessed of a high degree of cultivation, the following principle presents itself. That the culture, or the degradation of an aboriginal race, will be in proportion to the geographical distance of its residence from the common centre of dispersion. For instance, if we take the primitive residence of the post-diluvian race to have been in the north-west portion of Mesopotamia, it will be seen that the countries more immediately surrounding that central point, viz., Assyria, Chaldea, Egypt, Phœnicia, and Asia Minor, are those whose inhabitants were, in the earliest ages, possessed of the highest degree of culture ; whilst, on the other hand, at the points most distant from the same centre, the Papuans, the Hottentots, the Esquimaux, and other savage races, have degenerated almost to the lowest state compatible with the retention of rational endowments.”†

In order to test the correctness of the data, as far as the Esquimaux are concerned, upon which Dr Beke has established his hypothesis ; and upon which Kames, Herder, and Prichard, have wasted considerable learning and ingenious reasoning, I refer to the papers laid before the Society on the physical character and the arts and manufactures of the Esquimaux. It will be found that I have added six inches to the stature assigned to them by the authors mentioned ; that I have proved they did not, could not, dig subterraneous abodes ; and that from the same cause they were obliged, although not the only known savages who eat raw flesh, sometimes to eat their provision raw ; and I adduced the evidence of Cook, Kotzebue, Parry, Franklin, Lyon, Ross, and

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\* Quoted by Prichard, p. 502.

† Chas. F. Beke, in an article in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*.

others, that they preferred it cooked, when blessed with the means ; that the wearing the hair in great disorder was almost a solitary exception, and not a general rule ; that in contradiction to the terrifying face and animal and brutish exterior, I have quoted Cook, Parry, Franklin, Lyon, and Richardson ; that if anything remarkable was observable in the beard, it was in deficiency, and not in excess ; that their winter garments were not made of seals' skins, nor their summer dresses of the intestines of whales ; that they were not skilful in the chase of sables, and did not either use its skin for clothes or for barter ; for the very evident reason that no such animal was to be found in their country.

And I now proceed to adduce additional facts, arranged under the head of intellectual character. It will thus be seen which of the philosophers are correct, whether Lord Kames, who states "the women require compulsion to take upon them the troubles of a married life ;" I had almost forgotten Lord Byron who says in allusion to frigidity, "happy the nations of the moral north ;"—or M. Lesson, who asserts that "their loose morality renders them addicted to polygamy, and indifferent to the virtue of their wives and daughters ;" whether they are "dull or stupid," as Vitruvius will have it ; or "degenerated almost to the lowest state compatible with the retention of rational endowments," for which Dr Beke contends. The sucking of their own blood, and the suckling of their infants, with all the profound tenacious affection of animal maternity, scarcely demand attention, notwithstanding it appears in Dr Prichard's work ; but it may be necessary to state that the cause which Vitruvius assigns for their dulness and stupidity, "that of breathing a thick air," does not exist. The arctic atmosphere is as thin and as elastic as that of any part of the globe, and the sky is Italian. So free of moisture is the atmosphere during the winter that a few hours' exposure of linen, wet from the wash-tub, renders it so dry as not to require airing prior to being worn.

That the natives of Labrador were, to a certain extent, at the time Charlevoix wrote, the ferocious people he has described, I am not prepared to deny ; but I will neither admit that such is their general disposition, nor that the whole

race is to be accountable for so small a portion of the Esquimaux family. When they were visited by the Norwegians, and the early travellers, in search of a north-west passage, they were a peaceable and hospitable people ; and in return for a good disposition and friendly conduct to their discoverers and subsequent visitors, Thorsin, the Ice-lander, and Sir Martin Frobisher, our own countryman, as well as others, committed upon them the most gross acts of cruelty. The natives of Greenland were subject to the same inhuman treatment at the hands of the Danes and the English ; and had that good man Hans Egede been a Charlevoix, these inoffensive people would, from their spirited retaliation upon their enemies, have been branded with the same infamy that the French historian and Dr Prichard have endeavoured to fix upon the poor inhabitants of Labrador. But we can spare them the dreadful ordeal of public censure, for they also had an Egede in the person of Captain Cartwright,\* who passed many years among them, yet Dr Prichard makes no allusion to that traveller. The Esquimaux of Labrador, says Captain Cartwright, are “the best tempered people I ever met with, and most docile—a nation with whom I would sooner trust my person and property than that of any other.”

Sir Edward Parry found the natives of Melville Peninsula entitled to the same encomium. It is true that Hans Egede, of the natives of Greenland, and Sir Edward Parry and Captain Lyon, of those of Melville Peninsula, have borne testimony to the carelessness with which the aged and destitute are treated ; but these people, we know, form exceptions to the nation at large, and their more erratic mode of life, compared with that of the rest of the race, is no doubt the cause of this ; a kind of life which necessarily consigns the sick and infirm of all uncivilized races to desertion, and consequent starvation. Self preservation is inherent in man, civilized or uncivilized ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that it is self preservation which obliges the Esquimaux of Melville Peninsula to act as they do.

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\* Cartwright's Journal of his Residence on the Coast of Labrador.

Of their general disposition regarding their social relations among themselves, all who have visited them speak in the most favourable terms. They are uniformly described as most scrupulously honest, careful of the aged, affectionate to their children, devotedly attached to each other, and fond of their domestic animals. So little are they inclined to quarrel, that, after two years' acquaintance with the natives of Melville Peninsula, Sir Edward Parry has only related one case where it extended to blows ; and Captain Lyon remarks, in his private journal, in speaking of the same community, that their evenness of temper is not surpassed, if equalled, by any other nation. In pain, cold, starvation, disappointment, or under rough treatment, their good humour is rarely ruffled. Few have ever shewn symptoms of sulkiness, and even these for a short time only. Those who have, for an instant, felt anger at neglect, or at being punished for some offence, are in a few moments as lively and as well disposed to the persons who offended them as if nothing had occurred ; consequently that detestable passion revenge, so common to uncivilized man in general, is not known to them. Captain Lyon could learn of no instance of any one man having killed another, or of a son imbibing from his father any dislike towards particular persons ; and Sir John Ross informs us that, among the natives of Regent's Inlet, there is but a solitary case on record of a murder having been committed, and that occurred in hot blood.

With respect to their disposition in relation to strangers, hospitality is their leading virtue, and petty thieving their greatest vice. The narratives of all the travellers who have visited the Esquimaux teem with accounts of the hospitality they have received from them. When a stranger approaches their dwellings, it is the custom for one of the party to attach himself to the visitor, to carry his baggage, to point out the best road, to help him over the streams of water or fissures in the ice, and to attend him wherever he goes during his stay. On his arrival at the dwelling, he is supplied by the women with dry boots, and, if necessary, skin dresses, and then handed to the place of honour, a deer-skin seat. If reparation is wanted in the pulled-off clothes, they are immediately attended

to, and if the host is short of bedding, he or she, as the case may be, is contented to sit up while the guest sleeps. A poor old woman having received Sir Edward Parry as her guest, gave up her bed, as well as a large deer-skin blanket which she rolled up for his pillow, and felt contented in dozing away the night in a sitting posture before her lamp.\* That they are not always so polite, though equally hospitable, we are obliged to confess, from a circumstance which happened to Captain Lyon. On one occasion he “ was awakened from his slumbers by a feeling of great warmth, and to his surprise found lying beside him, under the same blanket, his Esquimaux host and his two wives, with their favourite puppy, all fast asleep and stark naked. Supposing this was all according to rule, Captain Lyon left them to repose in peace, and again resigned himself to rest.”†

Although among themselves, and, in the first instance, with foreigners, they are scrupulously honest, after a short acquaintance with the latter, the reverse is often found to be the case. Does it not, then, become a matter of question, whether, after all, the strangers are not the most in fault? For instance, the disposition for thieving is found to be prevalent among the natives of Hudson’s Strait and of Prince William’s Sound, whilst along the coast of North America the propensity decreases from west to east; and at its most eastern discovered limit that vice is not known. Here, it is evident, that even with foreigners it is not natural to them to be dishonest; for where they are most exposed to European trade, as at Hudson’s Strait and the north-west corner of America, the vice is notoriously common, while at Regent’s Inlet it is altogether unknown. Between Regent’s Inlet and Hudson’s Strait there is an intermediate state of things, if the trifling cases of theft related by Sir Edward Parry and Captain Lyon are to be taken into account. Out of two hundred of the natives of Melville Peninsula, the amount of those officers’ acquaintance in that locality, only three of their number were considered as determined thieves, and they are said to have performed their work so clumsily as

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\* Parry’s Second Expedition, p. 205.

† Lyon’s Private Journal, p. 246.

to have been instantly detected. One was a woman who endeavoured to secrete a nine-inch block in her boot, and the second was a man who was detected making off with the last piece of corned beef belonging to the midshipmen. Upon being chased, he practised a feint by dropping a piece of fat and kicking snow over it, as if the whole was buried.\* The third was Ooming, the wife of the latter, who, by being all attention, succeeded in picking an officer's pocket of his handkerchief. To weigh with these, both Sir Edward Parry and Captain Lyon† have mentioned numerous instances of extreme honesty; "which," adds Sir Edward Parry, "when we consider the amazing temptations constantly thrown in their way, in the shape of wood and iron, substances esteemed by them as highly as we do gold or jewels, we know how to appreciate their honesty."

Before leaving this part of my subject, I wish to correct some travellers in their assertion, that there is no such thing as gratitude amongst this people. It is evident they have been led into error, from taking too cursory a view of their peculiar customs. It is because they do not apply that virtue in the same way we do, that it has been thought to be wanting. For instance, it is their custom to express themselves grateful, only when their tendered favours are accepted. But, in urgent cases, it is evident they possess the feeling of gratitude after our own fashion. A party of Mountain Indians, jealous of Sir John Franklin, in consequence of his having traded with the Esquimaux, determined to attack him at a particular spot. This became known to an old Esquimaux, to whom had been given a knife, and some other trifling articles, on the preceding day; upon which he called aside two young men of his tribe, and said to them, "These people have been kind to us, and they are few in number; why should we suffer them to be killed? You are active young men, run and tell them to depart instantly." The young men suggested that the White men had guns, and could defend themselves. "True," said the old Esquimaux, "against a small force, but not against so

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\* Lyon's Private Journal, p. 174.

† Parry's Second Expedition, p. 163; Lyon's Private Journal p. 347.



large a body of Indians as are now assembled, who are likewise armed with guns, and who will crawl under cover of the drift timber, so as to surround them before they are aware; run, therefore, and tell them not to lose a moment in making their escape." Notwithstanding this, and much more which I could bring forward if necessary, Dr Prichard can reconcile unto himself his quotation from Charlevoix,—“ That, of all people in America, there is none who correspond more with our European idea of a savage; for they are ferocious, wild, defying, and restless, and always inclined to do mischief to the stranger.”

Additionally, let us review the information which the various travellers who have visited this interesting people have laid before us. Tooloak, a youth, and two pleasing little girls, of nine and eleven years of age, natives of Melville Peninsula, are said to have possessed a capacity equal to any thing they chose to take an interest in learning. “ Indeed, it required,” says Sir Edward Parry, “ no long acquaintance to convince us, that art and education might easily have made them equal or superior to ourselves.” Sauer\* has mentioned a native woman of Prince William’s Sound, who learned to speak Russian fluently *in rather less than twelve months*. In allusion to the natives of Labrador, Sir Martin Frobisher found them “ in nature very subtle and sharp-witted, ready to conceive our meaning by signs, and to make answer well to be *understood again*; and if they have not seen the thing whereof you ask them, then they will wink, or cover their eyes with their hands, as who would say, it hath been hid from their sight. If they understand you not whereof you ask them, they will stop their ears.”† The natives of Melville Peninsula make use of winks and nods in conversing; the former conveying a negative meaning, and the latter, as with us, an affirmative. The natives of Schismareff Inlet, when urged to an interview by Kotzebue, hit their heads with both hands, and then fell down as if dead; as much as to say that their lives were not safe: and, in order to make him understand the time it would take him to reach a particular spot, one of the little community

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\* Sauer’s Account of an Expedition into the North Parts of Russia.

† Richard Hakluyt’s Collection of Curious Voyages.

performed the following pantomime. He seated himself on the ground, and made the motion of rowing, by the necessary movements of his arms; this business he interrupted nine times, closing his eyes as often, and resting his head on his hand. Thus Kotzebue learned that it would take him nine days to get to his destined haven.

Captain Beechy obtained a knowledge of the coast he was surveying from a native of the same locality, after the following very ingenious and intelligible manner. The coast line was first marked out with a stick on the sand, and the distances regulated by the day's journey. The hills and ranges of mountains were next shewn by elevations of sand or stone, and the islands represented by heaps of pebbles, their proportions being duly attended to. Where the mountains and islands were erected, the villages and fishing-stations were marked by a number of sticks placed upright, in imitation of those which are put up on the coast wherever those people fix their abode. Thus a complete topographical plan the desired coast was, in the most intelligible manner, clearly laid down. The Esquimaux are, moreover, equally ready at comprehending similar methods adopted by Europeans, as Sir John Ross proved when, in order to fix the natives of Regent's Inlet the date of an appointment, he drew on the snow the form which the moon would then present. These people, we are further informed, at once adopted the use of the knife and fork, and all the paraphernalia of refined society connected with the table.\* A little boy at Melville Peninsula could imitate the cries of almost all the birds and animals he was acquainted with; the young ducks answering the distant call of the mother, having all the effect of ventriloquism. Every sound from the angry growl of a bear to the sharp hum of a musquitoe, we are informed, he was able to express in a wonderful manner.†

This art is turned to account in the chase of the deer, by imitating the peculiar bellow of these animals from behind a

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Ross's Expedition in the Victory.

† Lyon's Private Journal, p. 150.

large piece of rock or some other natural screen; and thus they are led by curiosity to within gun-shot.\* Boys from 12 to 16 years of age at once comprehend the mechanism of the gun, and will discharge it for the first time with perfect steadiness; and the men, with very little practice, soon become superior marksmen.† A case is recorded of a native of Labrador who killed an animal with the first shot he ever fired. The same individual, in company with two of his countrymen, while on a visit to Lord George Sutton at Kelham in Nottinghamshire, in 1772, was in at the death of a fox, which happened in an open field, with three couples and a-half of hounds out of twenty-five, a proof how hard they must have driven him, although neither of them had been on horseback more than three times before.‡

A disposition for aping European gait and manners was apparent among the natives of Kotzebue's Sound,§ the River Clyde,|| Melville Peninsula,¶ and Regent's Inlet.\*\* A favourite mode of shewing this propensity was by aping the English custom of walking up and down the deck of a ship. A shrewd, observing, merry fellow of Kotzebue's Sound, perceiving the officers of Captain Beechy's ship thus employed, determined to turn them into ridicule, by seizing a young midshipman by the hand, and strutting with him up and down the deck in a most ludicrous manner, to the great diversion of all present; and two native women of Melville Peninsula insisted upon walking arm-in-arm with Captain Lyon, in consequence of having been told that such was the practice of the Kabloona ladies, as they term our fair countrywomen. The father of a young female of Kotzebue's Sound shewed this kind of talent in another way. Observing Captain Beechy sketching his daughter's portrait, he seated himself down with a piece of flat board and plumbago, and very good humouredly commenced a portrait of him, aping his manner, and tracing every feature with the most affected care, whimsically applying, at

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\* Lyon's Private Journal, p. 336. † Parry's Second Expedition, p. 440.

‡ Cartwright's Journal.

§ Beechy.

|| Parry's First Expedition, p. 277. ¶ Lyon's Private Journal.

\*\* Ross's Expedition in the Victory.

the same time, his finger to the point of his pencil, instead of a penknife, to the great diversion of his wife and daughter. Captain Beechy has not informed us of the extent of his talent as a portrait-painter ; but it appears that he omitted the hat which Captain Beechy wore, and he was extremely puzzled to know how to place it upon the head he had drawn.

A lively little boy of Melville Peninsula, of four years of age, performed an aping trick after nearly the same fashion. Having witnessed an officer noting down the names of persons and things in a memorandum-book, he took it up, with the pencil, and then walked to every person in the hut, and gravely asked him his name, affecting, at the same time, to write it down,\* and a very amusing application of the art was practised by a native of the River Clyde. Sir Edward Parry had placed him on a stool for the purpose of taking his portrait ; and as he from time to time became weary, he was reminded to keep his position by Sir Edward Parry putting himself in the proper attitude, and assuming a grave and demure look. These actions the native always imitated in such a manner as to create considerable diversion among all present, and then very quietly kept his seat.† The mimicry of the Esquimaux, however, is said to be complete when the women form themselves into groups in order to gossip and talk scandal ; they then ape in perfection the manner of the persons of whom they speak, interlarding at the same time their stories with jokes at the expense of the absentees, though to their own infinite amusement.

The natives of Kotzebue Sound are considered by Captain Beechy very superior to the South Sea Islanders in recognising plates of natural history, if they represent those creatures with which they are acquainted—a talent which Sir Edward Parry turned to good account at Melville Peninsula, by obtaining from a native woman named Iligluik, a knowledge of the habitat of the *Larus sabini*, a species of gull which led to his adding that *rara avis* to his natural historical collection.‡ The same intelligence was observed among others of the same

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\* Lyon's Private Journal, p. 144. † Parry's First Expedition, p. 511.

‡ Parry's Second Expedition.

community ; and one of them named Toolemak learned himself to draw very fairly. So it was with Augustus, Sir John Franklin's interpreter ; and Sacheuse, who filled the same office in Sir John Ross's expedition to Baffin's Bay in 1818, became sufficiently master of the art as to make a drawing of the first interview of the exploring party with the Esquimaux of Regent's Bay, which, from its value, was engraved as an illustration to the narrative of that expedition.\*

We have the strongest evidence that their geographical knowledge is as perfect as the most civilized being could possibly attain, unassisted by nautical instruments. Iligliuk, and a native man of the same tribe with herself, drew the coast line from Winter Island to Igloodik, and pointed out the existence of the Fury and Hecla Strait, " with peculiar intelligence and extraordinary precision ;"† and two natives of Regent's Inlet, named Ikmallik and Tiagashu, were no less accurate in the delineation of that extraordinary neck of land, the Isthmus of Boothia.‡

The art of domesticating animals, and turning them to account, is no mean proof of intellectual power ; an art which we find in perfection amongst these people in regard to the dog, the only animal they can turn to account in the inhospitable regions they inhabit. Further, if we agree with the eminent historian Robertson, that tact in commerce, and correct ideas of property, are evidence of a considerable progress towards civilization, we must give the Esquimaux credit for great intelligence. More of this hereafter. Again, the neat mode of arranging their hair and dress, and the women being required to labour less than the men—the very reverse of that which is generally the case with uncivilized tribes—is further proof of intelligence.

As a test of intellectual power, it is both interesting and important to study the first impressions of the uncivilized, relative to the arts of civilization. A favourable opportunity to watch this trait of character occurred in two men, with each a wife and child, natives of Labrador, brought to England

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\* Ross's First Expedition, p. 88.

† Parry's Second Expedition, p. 197.

‡ Ross's Expedition in the Victory, p. 262.

by Captain Cartwright in 1772. The number of shipping they saw at London Bridge greatly astonished them, but the bridge itself, they passed through without taking the least notice of it. It was soon discovered they had taken it for a natural rock which extended across the river. They laughed at Captain Cartwright when he told them it was the work of man ; nor could they be persuaded to the fact until they came to Blackfriars' Bridge, which he caused them to examine with more attention ; shewing them the joints, and pointing out the marks of the chisels upon the stones. They no sooner, however, comprehended by what means such a structure could be raised, than they expressed their wonder with astonishing significancy of countenance. St Paul's, also, they supposed to be a natural production ; and they were quite lost in amazement when they were taken to the top, and convinced that it was a work of art. The people below they compared to mice, and insisted that it must be at least as high as Cape Charles, a mountain of considerable altitude. The exquisite nose of the hound, the sagacity and steadiness of the pointer, and the speed of the greyhound, were matters of great astonishment to them. But above all, they were most struck with the strength, beauty, and utility, of that noble animal the horse. At first the multiplicity and variety of objects confused them, and on one occasion, one of the men named Attiock, after a long walk, remained very pensive, and then turning up his head, and fixing his eyes upon the ceiling, he broke out into this soliloquy, " Oh ! I am tired ; here are too many houses ; too much smoke ; too many people ; Labrador is very good ; seals are plentiful there ; I wish I was back again." The longer, however, they continued in England the greater was their admiration, their ideas gradually expanding till at length they began more clearly to comprehend the use, beauty, and mechanism, of what they saw.

They attracted great notice during their stay in this country. On witnessing a review by His Majesty they were so surrounded by the crowd as to incommode their view, which attracting the notice of the King, he gave orders for their admission into the reserved ground. Here his Majesty

rode slowly past them, and condescended to salute them by taking off his hat, accompanied with a gracious smile; honours which they were highly pleased with, and often mentioned afterwards with great exultation. Provided with cloth dresses after their own fashion, instead of seal-skin, they were taken to Court by Royal command, where their behaviour and dress rendered them conspicuous objects. They were at the opera when their Majesties were there, and chancing to sit by Mr Coleman, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, he invited them to a play. He fixed upon *Cymbeline*, and they were greatly delighted with the representation. But their pride was most highly gratified at being received with a most thundering applause, by the audience on entering the box. The men observed to their wives, that they were placed in the King's box, and received in the same manner as their Majesties at the opera, which added considerably to their pleasure. They returned with Captain Cartwright to their country and friends to all appearance well; but in the ensuing Autumn they died of small-pox.

Travellers who have visited the Esquimaux at their own homes, have also furnished us with some interesting facts regarding their first impressions. Kotzebue informs us, that nothing attracted the attention of the St Lawrence Islanders so much as his telescope. The same admiration of that instrument was observed of the Esquimaux of the Mackenzie. They called it *eetee-yaw-gah* (far eyes), the name that they give to the wooden shade which is used to protect their eyes from the glare of the snow, which from the smallness of its aperture, enables them to see distant objects more clearly.\* The report of a gun astonished them much, and an echo from some neighbouring pieces of ice, made them think that the ball had struck the shore, then upwards of a mile distant;† while the Esquimaux of the Coppermine River, when fired upon by Hearne's party, ran and picked up the musket-balls, supposing them to be thrown to them as presents.‡ Perceiving fumes of tobacco issuing from the mouth of a person smoking, they

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\* Franklin's Second Journey.

† Idem.

‡ Hearne's Journey to the Frozen Ocean, p. 156.

called out ookah, ookah (fire, fire), and demanded to be told what he was doing.\* European clothing they conceived to be made out of the skins of animals ; and since they had none such in their country, they asked what sort of animals they were and where they were to be found.† Not recognising themselves in a looking-glass, the natives east of the Coppermine River endeavoured to find the stranger by peeping round the corner of the glass.‡ At seeing Captain Ross and Lieutenant Parry drawn on sledges by their men, they laughed heartily ;§ a proof they had no knowledge of difference of rank. They doubtless took them for children of an older growth at play. Glass they took for ice,|| biscuit for the dried flesh of the musk-ox ; watches, and musical instruments, for living creatures ; a musical snuff-box being, in their opinion, the child of an hand-organ ;¶ a little terrier dog was looked upon with contempt by the natives of Regent's Bay, as being too small to draw a sledge ; but had they known its intelligence, they would probably have been as desirous of obtaining it as the natives of Prince Williams Sound were a spaniel belonging to Captain Billings. That animal took a particular dislike to the natives, and being one day on shore tented with his master, he had an opportunity of displaying it. The cabin-boy had carelessly placed the tea-board, so that part of it with spoons, &c. were seen on the outside of the tent. One of the natives, perceiving this, appropriated the spoons to himself, which no one observed but the dog, who sprang up, leaped over those in the tent, seized the thief by the hand with the spoons in it, and held him fast till Captain Billings told him to let go ; a circumstance which kept the whole community honest ever afterwards in the dog's presence,\*\*

A little black cat, belonging to Captain Lyon, afforded the natives of Melville Peninsula an unceasing fund of amuse-

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\* Richardson's narrative in Franklin's Second Journey.

† Ross's First Expedition, p. 84.

‡ Kotzebue and Franklin.

§ Ross's First Expedition, 89.

|| Ross's First Expedition, p. 91.

¶ Lyon's Private Journal, p. 140, and Ross's First Exped. p. 93.

\*\* Sauer's Account of an Expedition into the North parts of Russia.



ment; and when the animal jumped over the arms folded for the purpose, their admiration was expressed by slowly and forcibly inhaling their breath and quickly nodding their head.\* A sailor, walking upon his hands along the deck of Lieut. Chappel's vessel, in Hudson's Straits, threw them into a violent fit of jumping and shouting;† and a mixture of mirth and admiration was excited by the effects of a winch, at which one man easily mastered and drew towards him ten or twelve others who held by a rope, using all their strength, and grinning with exertion and determination till conquered.‡

The natives of Regent's Bay shrunk back, as if in terror, from a pig whose pricked ears and ferocious aspect presented a somewhat formidable appearance. The animal happening to grunt, one of them was so terrified that he became from that moment uneasy, and appeared impatient to get away, and all the rest took to their heels in alarm at witnessing the exhibition of some juggler's tricks.§ When the women of Winter Island were informed that the Kabloona ladies were not tattooed, they were astonished at their being so devoid of taste; but when told that they never wore breeches, a general cry was raised "how cold they must be."|| On a royal salute being fired, three or four hëy-ya's (our "dear me"), were the sum-total of their remarks; and before the salute was ended, the whole party of Esquimaux, who were assembled for the purpose, became tired of it, although none of them had ever heard a great gun or seen a flag. Captain Lyon led an old woman to the side of a 24-pounder cannonade, and entered into conversation with her, when he observed that at the explosion she did not even wink her eyes, but very earnestly continued a long story about a pair of boots for which some of his people had not contented her.¶

From an anecdote, related by Captain Beechy, of the

\* Lyon's Private Journal, p. 145

† Narrative of a Voyage to Hudson's Bay, p. 66.

‡ Lyon's Private Journal, p. 140.

§ Ross's First Expedition, pp. 92, 95.

|| Lyon's Private Journal, p. 251. ¶ Idem, p. 402.

natives of Kotzebue Sound, he has come to a different conclusion regarding their nervous sensibility. He states, that the people of that vicinity were very inquisitive about his firearms, and to satisfy one of them, he made him fire off a musket that was loaded with ball, towards a large tree that was lying upon the beach. "The explosion, and the simple operation of touching the trigger," he adds, "so alarmed the native, that he turned pale, and put away the gun. As his fear subsided he laughed heartily, as did all his party, and went to examine the wood, which was found to be perforated by the ball, and afforded a fair specimen of the capability of our arms; but he could not be prevailed upon to repeat the operation."

Surely it is quite clear, upon Captain Beechy's own shewing, that it was *the recoil of the musket*, and not the *simple operation of touching the trigger*, that alarmed the native, for he struck the object he aimed at. That the musket was either overloaded or a kicker is evident; and I question if it would be deemed a *simple operation* to pull the trigger of a thoroughpaced kicker. That the perforation of the wood afforded the natives a fair specimen of the capabilities of Captain Beechy's firearms, I am quite prepared to believe; but the circumstance which forced itself upon my mind, on reading the anecdote, was, that the youth should have struck the object he aimed at with his first shot, which, it appears, made no impression upon Captain Beechy.

In stating, that if, according to the historian Robertson, tact in commerce is an evidence of a considerable progress toward civilization, we must give the Esquimaux credit for great intelligence, I had reference not only to their commercial transactions amongst themselves, but with the neighbouring-Red men and Europeans; and my reasons for again alluding to the subject is to remove the impression, "that they have little intercourse and commerce with their nearest neighbours." The fact is, that there are no people in either of the continents of America whose commercial system is so well organized as that of the Esquimaux. Sir John Franklin, and, more recently, Messrs Dease and Simpson have informed us that trade is carried on between the Esquimaux of the Mackenzie, and

the Loucheux, and Hare Indians, and that along the whole line of coast from the Mackenzie River to the Russian settlements in North Western America, furs on the one side, and European manufactures on the other, are annually exchanged at regularly established fairs; and thus pass from tribe to tribe, until, about the close of summer, they reach their respective limits.

Of the Esquimaux of the west coast of Greenland, Crantz observes, "that amongst themselves they hold a kind of fair. The Winter Festival of the Sun is frequented by persons who expose their wares to view, and make known what commodities they want in exchange. Any one disposed to purchase, brings the goods in request, and the bargain is complete. The principal trade is in vessels of Weichsteen, which is not to be met with in every place. And since the Southlanders have no whales, while the inhabitants of the north coast are in want of wood, numerous companies of Greenlanders make every summer a voyage of from five hundred to one thousand miles to the north, and even to Disko Island, in new Caiaks, and Oomiaks. They barter their lading of wood for the horns of the narwhale, the teeth, bones, and sinews of the whale, which they, in part, sell again during their return homewards. To the factors, the Greenlanders carry fox and seal skins, but particularly blubber."\*

Captain Graah, in describing the island of Attuk, remarks, that "an annual fair is held by the Eastlanders and Westlanders of Fredericsthal, who go there in the summer for the purpose of catching seals of the *Cristata* species.† The articles of barter are bear, seal, and dog skins for articles of European manufacture, and especially for spear and arrow heads, knives, needles, handkerchiefs, and tobacco."‡ I have also stated, that the Esquimaux of Churchill in Hudson's Bay, and of the Great Fish River, meet annually near the head waters of the latter, for the purpose of trading among themselves, and with the Chipewyans.

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\* Crantz's History of Greenland, pp. 160 and 161.

† Narrative of an expedition to the east coast of Greenland, by Captain W. A. Graah, p. 66.

‡ Idem. p. 81.

The estimation in which women are held among the Esquimaux is something greater than is usual in savage life,\* if we except the natives of Greenland,† who are not only physically, but mentally, inferior to the most of their brethren. It is a very general custom for parents to betrothe their children in infancy; and this compact being understood, the parties, whenever they are inclined and able to keep house, may begin living as man and wife, the husband being thenceforth bound to labour for their support; and this is not unfrequently the case at thirteen or fourteen years.‡ Where previous engagements are not made, the men select their wives amongst their relations or connections, paying but little regard to beauty of face or to person. Young men naturally prefer youthful females; but the middle-aged will connect themselves with old widows, as being more skilled in household duties, and better able to take care of their mutual comforts.

The marriage ceremony is very simple. The youth declares his passion to the parents and relatives on both sides; and, having obtained their consent, he immediately repairs to the habitation of the bride to take her away, if he considers himself strong enough; but if not, he presses into the service two or more old women, whose duty it is to convey the bride to her new home,—a work of no little difficulty; for, though ever so anxious for the union, it is incumbent upon her to appear otherwise, and she must contend with the messengers with all her might, or she will lose caste for modesty. After due, though prudent, reluctance, she at last yields, and is conveyed to her husband's home, where further ceremony must be gone through. For some time she keeps at a distance, sits retired in some corner upon the bench, with her hair dishevelled, and her face covered. In the mean while the bridegroom uses all the rhetoric of which he is master, and spares no pains to bring her to a compliance with his wishes. This is generally successful, and the wedding is concluded.§

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\* Richardson, Curtis, and Parry, p. 526.

† Crantz, p. 148.

‡ Lyon, p. 352; Parry, p. 378; Ross, p. 251.

§ Egede, p. 144.

It is not always mere dissimulation on the part of the bride; for sometimes she faints, sometimes elopes among the mountains, and not unfrequently cuts off her hair,—an act of greater importance to an Esquimaux woman than that of assuming the veil to an European, for she is then doomed to perpetual celibacy, whatever her after inclinations may be. If, however, she has not gone to the last extreme, the women go after her, and drag her by force to her suitor, who, in this case, uses to his utmost his persuasive powers, and when no kind and courteous behaviour will avail, compulsion is had recourse to. If she should then say, with Falstaff, “Not by compulsion,” and she should not speedily get a husband, neglect is succeeded only by death from starvation.\*

A very amusing anecdote is related by Captain Cartwright, of a little love-making on his part. Eketcheak, a native of Labrador, married a second wife, a young girl about sixteen years of age. “I took,” says Captain Cartwright, “a fancy to her, and desired that he would spare her for me, as I had no wife, and in great want of one. He replied, ‘You are welcome to her, but I am afraid she will not please you, as her temper is very bad, and she is so idle that she will do no work, nor can she use a needle; but my other wife is the best tempered creature in the world; an excellent sempstress, is industry itself, and above all, she has two children, all of whom are much at your service; or, if you please, you shall have both, and when I return next year, if you do not like either the one or the other, I will take them back again.’ I thanked him for his extreme politeness and generosity, and told him that I could not think of depriving him of the good wife and two children, but would be contented with the bad one. ‘You shall have her,’ said the native; ‘but before we proceed any farther in this business, I wish you would mention it to her relations, and obtain their consent.’ Her father being dead, I sent for her mother and two uncles, who readily gave their consent, and expressed great pleasure at the honour of the alliance. I then communicated my wishes to the young lady; but she no sooner understood what they were, than she

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\* Crantz, p. 177.

began to knit her brows; and the instant I had concluded my speech, in which I expatiated on the pleasure, elegance, and affluence which she would experience as my wife, to what she enjoyed in her present state, she contemptuously replied, 'You are an old fellow, and I will have nothing to say to you!'" Here ended the courtship.

Egede informs us, that, in Greenland, if the father of the youth is rich enough he gives a matrimonial feast, and prizes, to be contended for by running matches, a feast which lasts for two days.

The Esquimaux are polygamists, but they rarely have more than two wives, and only one if she have issue; and the women have the same privilege as to the number of husbands.\* Sir John Ross found two brothers at Regent's Inlet, having one wife between them.†

With the exception of the Greenlanders the women are treated well; are rarely, if ever, beaten; are never compelled to work, and are always allowed an equal authority in the household affairs with the men. Though a phlegmatic people, the Esquimaux may be said to treat them with fondness; and young couples are frequently seen rubbing noses, their favourite mark of affection, with an air of tenderness.‡ Okotook and his wife Iligliuk were frequently observed taking each other by the hand from mutual affection; a convincing proof, in Captain Lyon's mind, not only that Iligliuk was treated with great tenderness, but that she loved her husband.§ In allusion to an illness which Okotook laboured under, Captain Parry remarks of Iligliuk, that nothing could exceed the attention which she paid to her husband; she kept her eyes almost constantly fixed upon him, and seemed anxious to anticipate every want.|| It sometimes occurs, from inequality in a numerical point of view between the sexes, that a man journeys to a distant tribe in search of a wife. A native of Regent's Inlet had a propensity this way on a grand scale. He had discovered a tribe to the westward, where the females were most numerous; and when a wife was wanted for some of his party he transferred to him his own wife and went for another to himself; a friendly service which,

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\* Crantz, p. 147; Ross, p. 356. † Ross, p. 356. ‡ Lyon, p. 353.

§ Lyon, p. 150.

|| Parry, p. 217.

Sir J. Ross states, he had performed no less than six times. The advantage of this, as far as he was concerned, was obvious ; for in each of the six families he had a son or two, so that in his old age he might, according to custom, claim support from all or any of them, or from the most successful in hunting, as he was entitled to the share of a father.

At Igloodik and Regent's Inlet, cousins are allowed to marry,\* but a man will not wed two sisters ;† while at Greenland, marriage between cousins is rare, and there are instances of men having taken to wife two sisters at the same time, and even mother and daughter. Sir Edward Parry has related two instances which occurred at Igloodik of the father and son being married to sisters.‡ A son or daughter in law does not consider father or mother in law in the light of relations. § If a boy and a girl, although in no way related, have been brought up in the same family, they are looked upon as brother and sister, and are not allowed to marry.

The Esquimaux sometimes repudiate their wives, from real or supposed bad behaviour ;|| or, as is more generally the case, owing to want of issue. The ceremony is very simple. The arctic lord bestows a cross look upon his lady, and then leaves his home. The lady at once understands him, packs up her traps, and domiciles herself with her former protectors.

Instead, however, of repudiating their wives for a want of issue, they more frequently adopt the children of others. This custom was found to be extensively practised at Melville Peninsula, and the advantage is obviously that of providing for a man's own subsistence in advanced life ; and it is, consequently, confined almost exclusively to the adoption of boys, who can alone contribute materially to the support of the aged and infirm. When a man adopts the son of another as his own, he is said to "tego," or take him ; and, at whatever age this is done (though it generally happens in infancy), the child then lives with his new protectors, calls them father and mother, and is himself looked upon as the rising head of the household.¶ The agreement is almost always made between

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\* Ross and Lyon, p. 353.

† Lyon, p. 352.

‡ Parry, p. 528.

§ Ross and Lyon, p. 353.

|| Lyon, p. 352.

¶ Lyon, p. 353 ;

Parry, p. 532.

the fathers. Toolemak, an angetkook, or priest, having lost all his own children, was found by Sir Edward Parry to have adopted some of the finest male children of the tribe. For the same reason, a widow with a family never pines for want of a husband. It is on record, that a happy widow with five children was received with open arms as the partner of another, almost immediately after the death of her husband.\* If she has no family by this second husband, and she has no partiality for him, as soon as her sons are grown up, and become seal-catchers, she can desert her old benefactor; for by law she has absolute power over her sons' labour. It is evident, therefore, in Esquimaux land, that the widows with families have it all their own way.

And now let us consider the position of the childless widow, or, what is the same thing with the Esquimaux, the widow with infants of that tender age that they are not likely to be soon turned to account, as suppliers of provision. Poor creature! her fate is a hard one. While bewailing the loss of her husband to distraction, her effects are clandestinely purloined by her guests, who, at the same time, bear the compliments of condolence on their tongue. The bereaved widow has no resource, but to endeavour to ingratiate herself with him who has been her greatest plunderer. He will keep her a while, and, when he is tired of her, she must try to insinuate herself into the favour of another. But at last she and her children are left to their hard fate. A little longer, perhaps, they protract life by eating shell fish, and sea-grass; but finally they die from starvation. In Captain Parry's narrative of his second voyage, a very affecting case of this kind is recorded.

Self-preservation has evidently given rise to this custom; for the most able hunters at certain seasons have great difficulty in providing for themselves; and since neglect must fall heavily upon some, it is natural to suppose that a man will first cling to his wife and children. But I have no excuse for the cruel system of robbery which custom entails upon the weak and the friendless.

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\* Ross, p. 515.



When there are no children it is considered a reproach to both parties, but the poor woman generally gets the most blame, and is very ill treated, except she is a wise woman, and then she obtains a second husband and has another chance.

Nothing can exceed the affection of the Esquimaux for their children; which is displayed, not in the mere passive indulgence and abstinence from corporal punishment, but by a thousand playful endearments, such as parents and nurses practise in our own country. Nor, indeed, is severity necessary; for the gentleness and docility of the children are such as to occasion their parents little trouble. Even from their earliest infancy the Esquimaux possess that quiet disposition, gentleness of demeanour, and uncommon evenness of temper, for which, in more mature age, they are for the most part distinguished. Disobedience is scarcely ever known; a word or even a look from a parent is enough; frowardness and disposition to mischief, so common to our youth, form no part of their disposition. They never cry for trifling accidents, and sometimes not even from very severe hurts, at which an English child would sob for an hour. It is, indeed, astonishing with what indifference even tender infants bear the numerous blows they accidentally receive while carried at their mothers' backs.

It has been asserted by a late traveller,\* that the Esquimaux will barter their children for some trifling present; but, it is evident, and I have been at some pains to determine the point, that there is no ground for such an assertion. Sir Edward Parry was at first inclined to fall into this error, but upon a better acquaintance with the people, he discovered his mistake; and, let it be said to his praise, he has freely and publicly corrected himself.†

Esquimaux youth are as fond of play as any other young people and of the same kind; only, that, while an English child draws a cart of wood, an Esquimaux of the same age has a sledge of whalebone; and, for the superb baby-house of the former, the latter builds a miniature hut of snow, and begs a lighted wick of her mother's lamp to illuminate the little dwell-

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\* Sir George Back.

† Parry, p. 531.

ing. Their parents make for them, as dolls, little figures of men and women habited in the true Esquimaux costume, as well as a variety of other toys; many of these having some reference to their future occupations in life, such as canoes, spears, and bows and arrows. They sometimes serrate the edges of two strips of whalebone, and whirl them round their heads, just as boys do in England, to make the same peculiar humming sound. They will dispose one piece of wood on another as an axis, in such a manner that the wind turns it round like the arms of a windmill; and so of many other toys of the same simple kind. These, and possibly the smaller pup-pies, are the distinct property of the children, who sometimes sell them, while their parents look on without interfering or expecting to be consulted.

The education of children, according to Crantz, is thus conducted:—As soon as the boy can make use of his hands and feet, his father puts a little bow and arrow into his hand, that he may exercise himself by shooting at a target, and also instructs him in throwing stones at a mark. Towards his tenth year he provides him with a caiak, to practise rowing, oversetting, and rising, fowling, and fishing, by himself, or in company with other boys. In his fifteenth or sixteenth year he must go out with his father to catch seals. The first seal he takes is consecrated to make a festivity for the family and neighbourhood. During the repast, the young champion must relate his noble achievement, and how he managed to catch the creature. The guests admire his dexterity and prowess, pronounce the meat to be particularly good flavoured; and from this day the females begin to think of finding him a bride. At the age of twenty years he must make his own caiak, implements, and weapons, and fully equip himself for his profession; and if he is successful, he marries. To acquire perfection in the use of the caiak is no mean part of his education. Few become proficient; many, in consequence, are the lives that are lost by drowning.

The girls do nothing till they are fourteen years of age, but chatter, sing, and dance, with the exception of fetching water, and perhaps waiting on a child. But afterwards they must sew, cook, dress leather, and, when they advance fur-

ther in years and strength, help to row the woman's boat, where these are in use ; and, in Greenland, even build houses. From the twentieth year of a woman's life to her death, her life is a continuation of fear, indigence, and lamentation. If her father dies, her supplies are cut off, and she must serve in other families. She is thus secured abundance of provisions, but she will want good clothing ; and for want of this, especially if she be not handsome in person, or dexterous in her work, she must remain single. Should any one take her to wife, she fluctuates between hope and fear for the first year, lest from want of children she should be repudiated, and then her character is lost ; she must return to servitude, and perhaps purchase the support of life at a scandalous rate. If her husband retains her, she must now and then take a blow in good part, must submit to the yoke of a mother-in-law, or must submit to his having another wife or two. If her husband dies, she has no other jointure but what she brought with her ; and, for her children's sake, must serve in another family more submissively than a single woman, who can go where she will. But if she has any grown up sons, she is then better off than any married woman, because she can regulate the domestic affairs as she pleases. If a woman advances to a great age, and has no family to keep up her respect, she must pass for a witch ; which, being attended with some profit, she by no means dislikes.

Notwithstanding all the hard labour, fear, trouble, and vexation, the women commonly reach a greater age than the men, who are so worn out and enfeebled by passing most of their time at sea, in snow and rain, heat and cold, during the severest winters as well as summers ; by strenuous labour ; and by alternate fastings and feastings, that they seldom attain the age of 50. Many also lose their lives in the water, so that there are everywhere fewer men than women. The women frequently live till they are 70, and even 80 and upwards.

The Esquimaux believe in future rewards and punishments, and, like most other uncivilized races, have traditions concerning the creation and the deluge. They have their priests, in whose sayings and doings they put implicit belief, and their

superstitions. As far as we know, no kind of religious worship exists amongst them.

The dead are dressed in their best clothes, and conveyed, not by the regular entry, but through the window.\* The persons performing these duties, put on gloves, and stop their nostrils with skin or hair. Infants have their feet placed towards the rising sun, or east; half-grown children south-east; men and women in their prime with their feet to the meridian sun; middle-aged persons to the south-west; and very old people the reverse of children, or west.† It is customary to place weapons at the grave of a man, and culinary utensils and sewing materials at the grave of a woman;‡ and in Greenland, according to Egede, the head of a dog is placed near the graves of little children, as a guide to the land of souls. Dishevelled hair, and abstinence from the duties of the toilette, and from all gaiety, for a time, is adopted as a mourning rite; and the graves of the departed are frequently visited. At Melville Peninsula, it is usual to walk round the grave in the direction of the sun, and to chant forth inquiries as to the welfare of the departed soul,—Whether it has reached the land of spirits? If it has plenty of food?§ At the funeral of the inhabitants of Greenland, it is usual for a woman to brandish a lighted stick, at the same time calling out—*Piklerruk-pok*, “Here is no more to be got.” ||

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Lyon, 370; Egede, 153. † Lyon, 371. ‡ Lyon, 371; Egede, 151.

§ Lyon, 371.

|| Egede, 153.